4:Mickey E-5 (1940-?) 1947 AE5 Miao AE5

timber into agricultural implements, and did so. I have never found out what the truth of the matter was, but the Miao lost his case because the *hsien* judge found that his witnesses had not told the truth at other points.

Another case was that of a Miao who had become so angry at his wife that he had her jailed. Her relatives wanted to have her released so that her child need not be born in prison. The husband had disappeared and could not be found to ask him to change his mind. I wrote to the magistrate in the next *hsien*, and after his condition that some merchant in the city go surety for her was met, she was released.

A family in Shang-sai wished to build a house. The head of the family borrowed money from his brother. This brother later brought suit for the return of some of the loan. This was paid at the *hsien* offices on the day set, but the brother did not appear to receive it. Later the family who had received the loan sued the brother for the expense to which they had been put because of his failure to come and receive the payment on the day set.

These, of course, were only a few of the disputes which arose in the village or among the whole group of Cowrie Shell Miao. Most small matters were settled among themselves. Much of the old man's time was taken up with such cases. Sometimes others of the village elders were called in for consultation. This was according to the Chinese Government system, though in effect this formed the village government, or council. If matters could not be settled by them, they were taken before the *lien pao* official, and, if necessary, to the *hsien* magistrate.

Economic Institutions. Within Cowrie Shell Miao society there were no specific economic institutions. Families formed economic units, and as such carried on trade with Chinese merchants and rice brokers in the *hsien* city. Just inside the walls were a few tea-shops owned by city-dwelling Cowrie Shell Miao, conveniently situated for visiting country kinfolk to gather before they returned to their villages from market. The shop keepers were gardeners and farmers as well, and much of their trade was really a form of family visits. In their shops, as well

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584 marriage /99/ proposal is accepted, the young man and his family go to the bride. There a celebration lasts all day and all night. Then they all go with the bride to the village of the young man."

When the villages are small and far apart, as they are particularly in the case of the Meau settlements in northern Thailand, which makes it difficult for the young man to find [648] a bride himself, one turns to a Chinese trader, and he serves as go-between, for which he is paid a special remuneration (see the present chapter, the section "Dissolution of Marriage," and the chapter, "Trade").

572 584 608 Moreover, child betrothals are also customary. It happens, especially among blood brothers or friends, that they decide to strengthen these bonds still more through a marriage of the children. This decision is often made when the children are still small, often soon after their birth. For confirmation, the father of the little groom sends a silver ring of the value of one silver piece to the father of the little girl. This child betrothal, however, does not force the young people to marry for the principle holds good that no one can be forced into marriage and the young people themselves should come to an agreement on this question. If later, for instance, one of the 572 partners of such an early betrothal refuses to honor the marriage 584 promise given by the father, the latter arranges for a plenary 608 assembly of the sib members, at which women as well as men 614 participate. He presents the case, and the sib almost always 686 decides to release the young people from the promise of their fathers. But even if the opposite decision were reached, the betrothed can still insist on their refusal. If it is the groom who refuses, no indemnity has to be paid; if the girl refuses, however, three pieces of silver have to be paid to the rejected bridegroom. One can designate such child betrothals as rare 184 among the Meau of Thailand, whereas Savina (1) reports from 584

1. II, p. 226.

Indochina that they are common there.

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In case of malicious nonpayment, which in practice almost never occurs, the creditor turns to the village chief, who will make use of his powers. If even his efforts are unsuccessful, the creditor has the right to kill the debtor.

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Limitation of debts is unknown, but repayment in installments is customary. If a Meau debtor lives in a village other than the one where the creditor lives or moves to a different village, a sort of promissory note is made out. It consists of a piece of wood into which a notch is cut for the value of each ten pieces of silver. Thereupon the stick is split lengthwise in such a way that the halved notches remain on each of the sides of the stick. The creditor keeps one half of the stick; the debtor takes the other half with him. This practical custom seems to be very widespread among the Meau and not limited to Thailand. In any case Dhuraratsadorn (1) reports in similar fashion on the

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1. Page 172.

Meau in Tonkin.

If a creditor wants repayment from the debtor, he need not seek him out himself, but can ask someone else to demand the amount for him. He then gives the half of the stick to the messenger as identification. Upon presentation, the debtor is obliged to pay the messenger, identified by the half of the stick, the amount shown on the stick, beginning at the date agreed upon, provided that this half agrees with the one that remained with the debtor. On the other hand, if only partial payment is made, the old debt-stick is destroyed and a new one prepared showing the residual amount, and this is handled in the same way as the first. The messenger is then given a half of the stick to take back.

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The situation regarding property among the Akha differs considerably from that among the Meau. Uncultivated land belongs to no one; it is considered as unrestricted, as are hunting and fishing. Accordingly, the land may be taken into possession by any tribesman without further inquiry by merely beginning to clear and cultivate it. It is left entirely up to him to choose the land and the extent of the land. Since, however, land is usually

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